

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L MILAN 0001

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS:

SUBJECT: PARTING VIEWS OF MILAN PREFECT LUIGI PETRICCIONE

1. I CALLED TODAY ON DEPARTING MILAN PREFECT LUIGI PETRICCIONE WHO HAS BEEN PROMOTED TO THE CONSIGLIO DI STATO IN ROME AND WILL BE SUCCEEDED ON JANUARY 5 BY DOMENICO AMARI, PRESENTLY PREFECT IN NAPLES. PETRICCIONE WAS KICKED UPSTAIRS FOR REASONS NOT ENTIRELY CLEAR TO US BUT REPORTEDLY BECAUSE OF CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATIC PARTY DISCONTENT WITH HIS REPUTEDLY PRO-SOCIALIST ATTITUDES. WHILE HINTS OF THIS EMERGED FROM OUR CONVERSATION TODAY, PETRICCIONE HAD NEVER PREVIOUSLY GIVEN ANY EVIDENCE OF PREFERENCE AMONG THE DEMOCRATIC PARTIES.

2. OUR OWN EXPERIENCE WITH PETRICCIONE HAS BEEN UNIFORMLY EXCELLENT. FROM THE MOMENT OF HIS ARRIVAL UNTIL THE PRESENT, HE HAS BEEN ACCESSIBLE, COOPERATIVE, CANDID AND FRIENDLY. HE HAS GIVEN US EVERY ASSISTANCE IN EFFORTS TO ACQUIRE PROPERTY FOR THE AMERICAN SCHOOL AND FOR LICENSING THE US FIRM ADT TO OPERATE IN MILAN IN THE FACE OF CONSIDERABLE LOCAL OPPOSITION. MOREOVER, ON THE SCORE OF PHYSICAL PROTECTION, HE WENT OUT OF HIS WAY TO PROTECT THE AMBASSADOR DURING HIS VISITS AS WELL AS TO ASSIGN PERMANENT GUARDS TO THE CONSULATE. HIS MOST EVIDENT ACCOMPLISHMENT HAS BEEN THE CONSIDERABLE STRENGTHENING OF THE POLICE AND OTHER SECURITY FORCES TO COMBAT KIDNAPPING, TERRORISM AND COMMON CRIME.

3. PETRICCIONE HAS BEEN VERY POPULAR WITH BOTH THE CITY AND REGIONAL GOVERNMENTS. UNLIKE HIS MUCH MORE RESERVED, CONSERVATIVE

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AND UPPER CRUST PREDECESSOR, HE HAS TAKEN AN ACTIVIST ATTITUDE

TOWARD COOPERATION WITH LOCAL AND REGIONAL GOVERNMENT. THIS SUPPORT FOR GREATER LOCAL AUTONOMY IS NOT A UNIVERSAL TRAIT AMONG MEMBERS OF THE PREFECTURAL CORPS WHO ARE OFTEN VERY MUCH WED TO THE CLASSICAL MODEL OF THE CENTRALIZED STATE.

4. WHILE HE DID NOT OFFER AN EXPLANATION FOR HIS TRANSFER, PETRICCIONE LEFT NO DOUBT THAT IT WAS CONTRARY TO HIS WISHES. HE FELT THAT HE HAD SERVED THE PUBLIC INTEREST DURING HIS TENURE AND THAT WAS A SATISFACTION. UNFORTUNATELY, THAT ALSO MEANT PAYING A PERSONAL PRICE.

5. HE SAW THE ECONOMIC SITUATION AS FAIRLY DECENT IN LOMBARDY. IT WAS NOT BRILLIANT BUT IT WAS FAR BETTER THAN THE PRESS PORTRAYED IT. TAKE BUILDING FOR EXAMPLE. HE HAD BEEN PREPARING A MAJOR BUILDING PROGRAM FOR 1976-77 TO PEAK BEFORE THE PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS. BUT HE HAD DISCOVERED THAT IT WOULD BE HANDICAPPED BY A SHORTAGE OF MASONS - WITHOUT WHOM LITTLE IN ITALY CAN BE BUILT. THAT WAS SYMPTOMATIC OF THE ENTIRE LOMBARDY REGION. THERE SIMPLY WAS NO SIGNIFICANT LABOR AVAILABLE FOR INDUSTRIAL

EXPANSION.

6. POLITICALLY, THIS WAS ENCOURAGING. HE EXPECTED THE ECONOMY TO BE ON THE UP-SWING BY ELECTION TIME AND THAT WOULD HELP TO CONTAIN

COMMUNIST GAINS. THE REAL PROBLEM WAS THE CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATS. WOULD THE PARTY BE ABLE TO PULL ITSELF TOGETHER OR WOULD IT FURTHER UNRAVEL? IT WAS ESSENTIAL FOR THE FUTURE OF ITALY THAT THE DC RE-UNITE. ASSUMING THAT THIS OCCURRED AND THAT THERE WERE NO UNEXPECTED ECONOMIC REVERSE, PETRICCIONE INSISTED THAT THE COMMUNISTS WOULD BE HELD TO 30 PERCENT OF THE VOTE NATIONALLY.

7. THE GREAT DANGER, HE SAID, WAS THE PROGRESSIVE CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATIC ALLIANCE WITH THE COMMUNISTS. IT MIGHT NOT BE EVIDENT TO OUTSIDERS. BUT IT WAS ALL TOO PLAIN TO INSIDERS LIKE HIMSELF. LITTLE BY LITTLE, THE CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATS WERE MAKING THEIR PEACE WITH THE COMMUNISTS. THE ABORTION LAW WAS ONE EXAMPLE.

8. IT WAS THIS CREEPING THREAT THAT EXPLAINED THE SOCIALIST ANNOUNCEMENT DEC 30 OF THE PROVOCATION OF A GOVERNMENT CRISIS
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EARLY IN JANUARY, PETRICCIONE SAID. NO, THERE WAS NO MENTION OF THE MATTER IN PSI SECRETARY DE MARTINO'S STATEMENT. BUT THAT WAS THE BEHIND THE SCENES MOTIVATION. ACCORDING TO PETRICCIONE, THE SOCIALISTS WERE DEEPLY WORRIED ABOUT THE PROGRESS OF THE COMMUNISTS AND FEARED A PCI-DC DEAL. NOW THE PSI WAS LAYING THE GROUND WORK FOR A PSI-DC GOVERNMENT TO BE FORMED EARLY IN 1976 WHICH WOULD BE THEIR PLATFORM TO GO TO THE PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS.

9. THERE SHOULD BE NO MISTAKING THE NATURE OF THE ITALIAN COMMUNISTS, HE CONCLUDED. THEY WERE NOT SOCIAL DEMOCRATS DISGUISED AS COMMUNIST. THEY WERE THE REAL THING AND WOULD SHOW THEIR TRUE COLORS IF THEY EVER CAME TO POWER IN ROME - WITH CONSEQUENCES THAT HAD TO AFFECT FRANCE AND THEREFORE ALL OF EUROPE.

10. IT WAS THAT BELIEF, HE CONCLUDED, THAT DETERMINED THE SOCIALIST FEAR OF THE COMMUNISTS AND THE SOCIALIST DECISION TO WORK FOR A PROMPT REVIVAL OF A DC-PSI GOVERNMENT.FINA

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